

Nov 30 - Dec 27

Advent 2008

for Bethel Evangelical Missionary Church, Lion's Head

Advent Study Guide & Devotional



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This Study Guide and Devotional is designed to help you
anticipate and prepare for Christ's coming in Advent.

Christ has come! Christ is coming again!

Use the Study Guide Section toward the beginning of each week.

Use the Devotional Section toward the end of each week.

Study Guide

Toward the beginning of the week consider the following as part of your regular personal, family or group study.

Prepare

What is Advent? Advent is a time to prepare for Christ's coming. As we look forward to the coming of Christ in the manger at Bethlehem, let's also consider Christ's coming again. Advent is a season of hope, of waiting and anticipating what God desires to do.

Before you do anything else, pause and take time to bow your head be silent before the Lord. This is not a time to be busy with thoughts and prayer items. Be still and be silent, wait and wait a little longer.

Only after you have been silent for a good period of time (yes, even as a group) should you continue.

Pray this prayer aloud

Lord, open to us the gates of justice. Teach us when to be silent. Yet in every moment let us take refuge in you and rest our confidence in you. Let us live always in your holy city; may you be the rock of our house. Amen.

Stuhlmueeller, Carroll. *Biblical Meditations for Advent and the Christmas Season*, New York: Paulist, 1980,19.

Look up and read aloud these passages:

from the prophet Micah: **Micah 5:1-5a**
from the Gospel: **Luke 21:25-38**

Respond

The prophet Micah speaks about the coming Messiah as one who will come from Bethlehem to rule Israel. He will Shepherd His people and they will dwell securely in Him. His fame will reach to the ends of the earth.

In your group or as individuals, ***discuss / think on*** some of the reasons why God desired to raise up Christ the Messiah and make Him great. Ask questions like:

Who did Jesus come to earth for?
What all did Jesus come to do? Think of more than one answer
What kind of things did Jesus call others to do?
Why should we respond to His call?

Take some time to ***pray about those things you have just discussed*** and thought about.

Expectation

Jesus warns us in the Luke passage read earlier, to not be preoccupied with loose living and worry about the cares of life. We are to be alert at all times by praying and having the strength to “avoid being harmed by the tumultuous times and circumstances before His return.”

(p. 2004 ESV Study Bible)

Take the time **individually** to actually **write out a list** of things you care deeply about in life or enjoy doing (your home, family, your job, your toys J, reading, cooking, etc.).

Cares List: _____

feel free to add as many as you like

Now **Share your list** with someone (or your group).

Then **spend time praying**, asking the Lord to take care of these burdens and concerns of your life that they would not get in the way of anticipating His coming and sharing your life with others.

Discuss together in your group and **make note** for yourself:

One way that you can share what God has given you with someone else that will help bring them closer to Christ.

For example:

I enjoy reading and can share a book with someone who has a similar interest. Then we can start a casual discussion together about it and discover things together.

Or,

Invite someone over for dinner and ask them to share their life story.

Follow up with one another next week to find out what happened!

Devotional

Toward the end of this week, make time to offer praise to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Use the following resources to help you:

Praise

Read **Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13** aloud

Pause to consider ***in what ways God has been faithful to you. Speak them aloud.***

Reflect on this:

Advent Hymn

*Creator of the stars of night,
Your people's everlasting light,
O Christ, Redeemer of us all,
We pray you hear us when we call.*

*In sorrow that the ancient curse
Should doom to death a universe,
You came, O Savior, to set free
Your own in glorious liberty.*

*Come, Sun and Savior, to embrace
Our gloomy world, its weary race,
As groom to bride, as bride to groom:
The wedding chamber, Mary's womb.*

*At your great Name, O Jesus, now
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow;
All things on earth with one accord,
Like those in heav'n, shall call you Lord.*

*Come in your holy might, we pray,
Redeem us for eternal day;
Defend us while we dwell below,
From all assaults of our dread foe.*

Evening hymn for Advent – Eighth century
O'Gorman, Thomas J. *An Advent Sourcebook*. Chicago: LTP, 1988, 9.

Review this week's Memory Verse saying it several times:

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.* Psalm 100:4 TNIV

Study Guide

Toward the beginning of the week consider the following as part of your regular personal, family or group study.

Prepare

Take a moment to **Follow Up** from last week. Discuss/reflect on what you did to share with others what God has given you in a tangible way.

As you take time today to reflect on the peace that Christ brings, keep in mind that **Peace brings Unity and Harmony**.

Consider this verse as you begin:

*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,*

Psalms 139:14

Take some time to **pray for these things**:

Peace in the world – think of some specific items that come to mind
Unity and harmony in the Church, Christ's Body – in your local church as well
Unity in your family – pray for one another about things that are of concern right now

Look up and read aloud these passages:

from the prophet Malachi: **Malachi 2:10-3:1**
from the Gospel: **Luke 1:5-7**

Respond

The prophet Malachi affirms the marriage covenant and the importance of godly offspring. He also looks to Jesus Christ as the One who will be God's witness and fulfill the presence of the Lord among the community in order to bring purity.

(p. 1777 ESV Study Bible)

Take some **time in silence** (even as a group) to confess before the Lord any unfaithfulness to your family and any unfaithfulness in your relationship to Him. Ask Him for forgiveness and to show you ways to help you turn away from those things.

You may want to use a journal to write these thoughts out – be specific. When you have done so, write in large letters over the page, FORGIVEN! If you like, destroy the paper.

*If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 1:9 TNIV

Expectation

Luke tells the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth's faithfulness to God in everything.

God desires that we be faithful to him for when we do so He grants us peace and fellowship with one another.

Consider these words as we look at some possibilities in our faithfulness to Him:

Pray as though everything depended on you and work as though everything depended on God - Ignatius of Loyola

Kirk, James G. *Meditations for Advent & Christmas*,
Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989, 32.

Share with one another some areas in your life where you would like to be more faithful.

Discuss together in your group or write out on a piece of paper, what specifically you would like prayer for about those items.

Then **spend time praying**, each person praying aloud for what someone else has shared.

Take note of what has been prayed for and make a list so that you can continue to pray throughout this week for that person

Follow up with one another next week to find out what happened!

Devotional

Toward the end of this week, make time to offer praise to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Use the following resources to help you

Praise

Read **Psalm 126** aloud

One person pray that the Lord would:

Help us to see and expect restoration
Fill our mouths with laughter
Put shouts of praise on our tongue

Read this prayer over silently.

Then say this prayer aloud varying readers for each stanza:

*O God, whose will is justice for the poor
and peace for the afflicted,
let your herald's urgent voice
pierce our hardened hearts
and announce the dawn of your kingdom.*

*Before the advent of the one who baptizes
with fire of the Holy Spirit,
let our complacency give way to conversion,
oppression to justice,
and conflict to acceptance of one another in Christ.*

*We ask this through him whose coming is certain,
whose day draws near:
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.*

Prayer, Second Sunday of Advent
O'Gorman, Thomas J. *An Advent Sourcebook*. Chicago: LTP, 1988, 80.

Review this week's Memory Verse saying it several times:

*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.*

Psalm 100:4 TNIV

Study Guide

Toward the beginning of the week consider the following as part of your regular personal, family or group study.

Prepare

Take a moment to **Follow Up** from last week. Discuss/reflect on the items you shared with the group to be praying for.

Joy is the result of Obedience to God.

Before reading the texts below, ask one another this question and discuss:

Q: What do you believe to be the significance of Remembering?

Look up and read aloud these passages:

from the prophet Malachi: **Malachi 3:16 - 4:6**
from the Gospel: **Mark 9:9-13**

Respond

The prophet Malachi mentions a book of remembrance, a book of the Lord that recorded “those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name (3:16 ESV).”

Those who are obedient to the commands of the Lord are precious to Him. He will remember them and save them. But, Elijah must come first before the Lord comes to restore relationships. “The New Testament identifies John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Malachi’s prophesied Elijah (Matt. 11:10-14; 17:10-13).”

(p. 1779 ESV Study Bible)

As we consider John the Baptist as the one who came to prepare the way of the Lord, make a comparison list using the Scriptures provided:

John’s identity

Matthew 11:10 _____

Jesus’ identity

Matthew 11:3 _____

John’s message

Mark 1:4 _____

Jesus’ message

Mark 1:15 _____

Expectation

Mark's gospel read earlier also mentions Elijah coming and Jesus identifies John the Baptist as having fulfilled Elijah's coming as his messenger. As we consider John's role and his giving witness to Jesus, keep in mind that Obedience to God brings joy and God remembers those who are faithful.

Continue with the comparison list using the Scriptures provided:

John's role

Luke 1:17, 77 _____

Jesus' role

Luke 1:69 _____

John's witness

John 1:8 _____

Jesus' witness

John 1:1 _____

Discuss together in your group as you work at the above comparison list.

Share with one another a time when you were able to tell someone of your hope in God.

Then **pray with one another** that you would be aware of opportunities to share the reason for your hope in God.

Follow up with one another next week to find out what opportunities you were given to share with others your hope in God!

Devotional

Toward the end of this week, make time to offer praise to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Use the following resources to help you

Praise

Read **Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26** aloud

Consider this poem,
as you spend several moments *in quietness and silence* before the Lord

Come, Lord Jesus! Do I dare
Cry: Lord Jesus, quickly come!
Flash the lightning in the air.
Crash the thunder on my home!
Should I speak this awful prayer?
Come, Lord Jesus, help me dare.

Come, Lord Jesus! You I call
To come, come soon, are not the child
Who lay once in the manger stall,
Are not the infant meek and mild.
You come in judgment on our fall.
Help me to know on whom I call.

Come, Lord Jesus! Come this night
With your judgment and your power,
For the earth is dark with blight
And in sin we run and cower
Before the splendid raging sight
Of the breaking of the night.

Come, my Lord! Our darkness end!
Break the bonds of time and space.
All the powers of evil rend
By the radiance of your face.
The laughing stars with joy attend.
Come, Lord Jesus, be my end!

The night is far spent . . .

L'Engle, Madeleine. *The Irrational Season*. New York: Seabury, 1979, 11.

Review this week's Memory Verse saying it several times:

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,
in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* 1 Thess. 5:16-18 NKJV

Study Guide

Toward the beginning of the week consider the following as part of your regular personal, family or group study.

Prepare

As we come to the last week during Advent in our preparation for the coming of Christ, **Pause to pray and give thanks** for all the times & seasons in life that He gives us. Think of some that perhaps you haven't given thanks to God for.

Thank Him for the coming of the Messiah

– Preparing for His coming is a time of hope and anticipation.

Look up and **read aloud** these passages:

from Ecclesiastes: **Eccl. 3:1-8**
from the Gospel: **Mark 11:1-11**

Respond

Take some time to ***read through this prayer*** of confession. Then pray in your own words.

God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sin. Daily we awaken to the new life you give us, yet we fail to be thankful for the rest we have received. Moments await our decision to serve you, yet time passes away as we think only of ourselves. Our routine affords us the chance to minister to others, yet we are absorbed with our own self-improvement. The day is soon passed; it has been much the same as the others. Forgive us for casting aside the precious time you have given.

Kent, Corita. *When We Gather: A Book of Prayers for Worship Year B*, Philadelphia: Geneva, 1984. 64.

Expectation

Mark tells of the event where Jesus rides into Jerusalem and the people hail Him as the One sent to establish the Kingdom of God promised through David. As we consider the story of God every day, let's be sure to always have His praise in our mouths and on our tongues. God sent His Son and He has overcome sin and death and is coming again.

Share with someone or your group a time when giving praise to the Lord changed your life in some way.

Follow up this Advent preparation study by making a list of 7 people to pray for – even those you don't know very well. Find out from them what they would like you to pray for. Then pray for them, one person for each day of the week. Check back with those people every once in a while and find out what God is doing in their lives.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Devotional

Toward the end of this week, make time to offer praise to the Lord and proclaim His greatness. Use the following resources to help you

Praise

Giving praise is all about being transformed by God.
What do you praise God for today?

Read **Psalm 148** aloud

The command to Praise is repeated at least 12 times in this Psalm

Think of at least 12 opportunities in your life where you can be praising God.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 12. _____ |

Insight:

We must be transformed and renewed in the heart from day to day. Otherwise Christ is born in vain. This is the word of the prophet: 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.' This is for us the hardest point, not so much to believe that he is the son of the virgin and of God as to believe that this Son of God is ours. Truly it is marvelous in our eyes that God should place a little child in the lap of a virgin and that all our blessedness lie in him. And this Child belongs to all humankind. God feeds the whole world through a Babe nursing at Mary's breast. This must be our daily exercise: to be transformed into Christ, being nourished by this food. Then will the heart be suffused with all joy and will be strong and confident against every assault.

- Martin Luther

Ramshaw, Gail. *Richer Fare for the Christian People*, New York: Pueblo, 80.

Review this week's Memory Verse saying it several times:

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing,
in everything give thanks;*

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess. 5:16-18 NKJV